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OCI-1269/66

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
Office of Current Intelligence
12 April 1966

INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

The Political Situation in South Vietnam
(As of 10:00 A.M.)

1. Despite the efforts of the government to make the National Political Congress appear as representative as possible, it was attended last night only by 92 of the approximately 170 invitees, according to press accounts. In an address to the Congress, which was attended by five military Directorate members and the US ambassador, Chief of State Thieu reportedly stated that if the people want an elected government in the shortest time possible, so does the military. The Buddhists apparently boycotted the meeting as did nine of the 48 provincial and municipal council members, although there were at least three influential lay Catholics in attendance.

2. Approximately 2,000 persons attended a meeting at the Buddhist Institute in Saigon last night. The press reports that the subject was probably the organization of future demonstrations against the government. Thich Thien Minh, newly appointed leader of the "Buddhist Forces" political party, reportedly met earlier in the day with Father Hoang Quynh, apparently to discuss the political crisis.

3. Thich Tri Quang issued a statement to the English language Saigon Daily News yesterday repudiating charges that the ranks of the Buddhists are infiltrated by Communists and that he is generally opposed to American policy. He claimed to be opposed only to US interference in setting up a national assembly and he denied that he advocates negotiations with the Communists if the Buddhists come to power.

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State Dept. review completed

4. From Da Nang, the 2nd and 3rd Vietnamese marine battalions have been airlifted back to Saigon, even though the press reports that nearly 5,000 demonstrators, some of them armed, marched through the streets carrying anti-American banners. Colonel Dan Quang Yeu, one of the anti-government military commanders in Da Nang, and Mayor Man held a press conference yesterday at which Yeu expressed his lack of confidence in the Ky government and at the same time answered that the soldiers would follow the orders of General Dinh, the I Corps commander.

5. Struggle forces and demonstrators in Hue continue to be as intransigent as ever. Stores were reported closed and public transportation did not function as approximately 8,000 persons attended a mass meeting followed by marchers with banners denouncing the Thieu-Ky political congress, the Directorate and war cabinet, and indicating that the "political congress is a puppet of the CIA."

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CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY
Office of Current Intelligence
12 April 1966

INTELLIGENCE MEMORANDUM

The Political Situation in South Vietnam
(As of 2:00 P.M.)

1. Prime Minister Ky apparently made behind-the-scenes contacts with Buddhist leaders Tam Chau and Tam Giac last night to try to woo them into attending the government sponsored National Political Congress. Ky's special adviser, Bui Diem, reported to the Embassy political counselor that Ky agreed the government would be willing to accept an elected constitutional convention, one of the Buddhists' early demands, and that it would accept the decision of the congress in calling for early elections for the convention. Although Tam Chau was not opposed to the idea, he expressed his distrust of Chief of State Thieu, and chose to boycott the congress. The government is still seeking to persuade the bonzes, but Tri Quang, as usual, is expected to resist any pressure to accept a compromise solution.

2. The Embassy feels that the replacement of Colonel Lieu, Director-General of the National Police, is imminent, although he is still physically in office. Ky removed him at the 8 April Directorate meeting on reports that he was corresponding and clandestinely supporting General Thi's activities in Da Nang. Several cabinet members closely identified with Thi and Lieu, have threatened to resign if the replacement is formalized; they believe that Lieu commands support from moderate Buddhists which would be withdrawn in the event of a change. The group of cabinet members also favors the return of General Thi to a position of importance, such as defense minister.

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3. The province chief of Quang Nam, in which Da Nang is an autonomous city, is apparently the captive of the struggle committee in the province capital and is being held in the local pagoda. Dr. Nguyen Huu Chi, although well treated, is under questioning by local Buddhists who are suspicious of his activities during the past few days.

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